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Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System

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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report was prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 52/3 of 22 October 1997 on cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System (SELA).

2. For the preparation of the present report, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) wrote to the following organizations of the United Nations system requesting an update of their activities with SELA: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Trade Organization (WTO), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Labour Organization (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Telecommunication Union, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Universal Postal Union, World Bank, World Health Organization (WHO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Environment Programme, International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Institute for Training and Research, United Nations University (UNU), United Nations Development Fund for Women, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). Eight of those organizations sent updated information on their cooperation with SELA. Eleven noted that they did not currently carry out any activities with SELA, although some of them expressed a desire to do so in the future. The following summary is based on the information submitted.

II. Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System

3. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session (A/52/376), since the establishment of SELA, in October 1975, considerable cooperation has taken place between United

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Nations organizations, agencies and programmes, especially ECLAC, and SELA.

4. Such cooperation has intensified over the years and has become more diversified in terms of both the areas of cooperation and the organizations concerned.

5. Cooperation between ECLAC and SELA has consisted, *inter alia*, of the participation of representatives of ECLAC and SELA in meetings of the two institutions and in the preparation by ECLAC of specialized documents in various subject areas in support of SELA activities. Some examples of this cooperation are listed below.

6. The Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning continued to coordinate its programme activities with SELA, through regular contacts with SELA officials and staff members.

7. The Latin American Centre for Economic and Social Documentation (CLADES) cooperated with SELA in 1998 in the framework of ECLAC assistance in reconstituting the SELA Permanent Secretariat's information systems following the fire at its premises in February 1998. The technical assistance mission undertaken in April 1998 issued a report entitled "Reconstruction of the data bank and information management systems of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA". UNDP helped to finance this mission.

8. In the framework of an initiative between ECLAC, SELA and the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA), the Division of International Trade, Finance and Transport of ECLAC participated in the first three meetings of trade policy officials of Latin America and the Caribbean. The purpose of those meetings is to examine and orient American and Caribbean policies in the light of various international trends and prospects and national policies to promote economic and social development. During the fourth meeting, convened at ECLAC headquarters in August 1998, a coordination meeting of all subregional economic integration bodies was held.

9. Staff members from the Division of Production, Productivity and Management of ECLAC participated as lecturers in the second meeting of the Regional Forum on Industrial Policy, organized by SELA in Caracas on 31 July and 1 August 1997. That meeting marked the continuation of cooperation with SELA in the area of industrialization begun at the first meeting, held in San José in October 1994.

10. The subregional headquarters of ECLAC in Mexico cooperates closely with the Permanent Secretariat of SELA in conducting the course on Central American integration given annually since 1995 in various Central American countries. It is intended to continue offering these courses until the year 2000. Cooperation takes the form of joint organization of the courses, preparation of specialized documentation, lectures by ECLAC staff and experts and assistance in the substantive and conceptual design of the courses.

11. ECLAC has contributed, as joint publisher, to the production of several SELA books on various subjects, in particular social policy, economic integration and the environment.

12. FAO has maintained close cooperation with SELA, *inter alia*, through reciprocal attendance at meetings, exchange of information, experience, documents and publications, and implementation of joint activities.

13. In the biennium 1997–1998, FAO assisted in the organization of and was represented at the following events: (a) the Twelfth Meeting of Directors of International Technical Cooperation and Thirteenth Meeting of the Coordinating Mechanism for International Organizations and Regional Forums in charge of carrying out Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC), held in Antigua, Guatemala, in May 1997; (b) a workshop organized jointly by SELA and the Inter-American Development Bank on market access issues in the Uruguay Round, held in Cartagena, Colombia, in June 1997, with the participation of 24 Latin American and Caribbean countries, at which FAO presented a document on provisions for agricultural products, including sanitary and phytosanitary measures, subsidy provisions and their implications, tariffs, and opportunities and challenges presented by the agricultural provisions of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM); (c) the Thirteenth Meeting of Directors of International Technical Cooperation, held in Bridgetown, Barbados, in June 1998; (d) the Fourteenth Meeting of the Coordinating mechanism for International Organizations and Regional Forums in charge of carrying out TCDC, held in Bridgetown, Barbados, in June 1998; (e) a SELA/UNCTAD workshop on agricultural trade in the multilateral framework focusing on the Latin American and Caribbean Perspective, held in Geneva in June 1998.

14. Although the International Trade Centre, UNCTAD/WTO did not implement any specific activity or project with SELA during the period concerned, it expressed interest in establishing channels of cooperation between the two organizations.

15. IMF has continued its cooperation with SELA in areas of common interest in the field of its competence and jurisdiction. In particular, the IMF Legal Department provided technical assistance for the organization of the second and third high-level meetings of the reform of

financial systems in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Caracas on 27 and 28 October 1997 and in Madrid on 28 and 29 May 1998, respectively. Those meetings were attended by bank superintendents, central bank officials, representatives of the commercial banking system and academics from Latin America and other regions.

16. UNESCO continued to cooperate with SELA in its areas of competence, especially in programmes relating to integrated economic and social policies, growth and employment, globalization and cultural undertakings, intellectual property, crafts development and communication for integration. The UNESCO office in Caracas was represented at governmental and expert meetings on these subjects.

17. UNESCO and SELA are jointly executing a regional project on communication for integration in Latin America and the Caribbean, begun in 1994 with the support of the International Programme for the Development of Communication. The main objective of this project is to foster the development of a culture of integration in the countries of the region, with a view to improving quality of life and encouraging the participation of citizens in the processes involved. The project, which will be completed in the next few months, has achieved the following results:

(a) Establishment and start-up of a network of Latin American economic newspapers, officially inaugurated in Bogotá in August 1995. The network currently links 14 important Latin American newspapers by electronic mail. There is a possibility that other newspapers will be included in the network in the near future;

(b) Production and distribution of a monthly bulletin on integration in Latin America and the Caribbean, published in English and Spanish;

(c) Establishment of a network of governmental and private users for the exchange of information on integration processes in the region;

(d) Strengthening of the Information Dissemination System for Latin American and Caribbean Cooperation and Integration Bodies (SIDALC), composed of the press officers of 14 regional integration and cooperation bodies;

(e) Production of a series of 20 radio programmes on regional integration;

(f) Strengthening of mechanisms for the telematic dissemination of information on issues of interest to SELA;

(g) Completion of a study on cultural identity in the region and provision of technical and financial support for a seminar on economic integration and culture in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Buenos Aires on 30 and 31 July 1998.

18. In addition, SELA has provided technical and financial assistance in the organization of two meetings on the theme of peace, tolerance and integration, held in Panama in May 1995 and in El Salvador. It also provided support to the Latin American Forum on Communication and Information for Democracy, organized by UNESCO in Caracas on 30 June and 1 July 1997. The theme of that meeting was freedom of expression and freedom of the press, human rights that are fundamental for the exercise of democracy in Latin America.

19. During the period in question, UNIDO organized, in close cooperation with SELA, the second meeting of the Regional Forum on Industrial Policy from 30 July to 1 August 1997.

20. World Bank staff attended various SELA-sponsored events and vice versa. The World Bank, together with SELA, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and privatization agencies in Latin America and the Caribbean, form the Latin American and Caribbean Network on Privatization, established in January 1996. Through this network, the World Bank has co-sponsored two annual conferences, two meetings on sectoral privatization and a training course, in addition to providing support to the Network's page on the SELA Web site at *http://www.sela.org*.

21. WIPO organized its Regional Symposium for Latin American and Caribbean Countries on the Economic Importance of Intellectual Property and on Enforcement of Rights under the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights in Cartagena, Colombia, from 12 to 14 March 1997, in cooperation with the Government of Colombia and SELA. High-level government officials took part in this event. SELA was represented by its permanent Secretary, who closed the symposium together with a representative of the Government of Colombia.

22. UNDP provided SELA with financial support for a symposium on decentralization and for the Twelfth Meeting of Directors of International Technical Cooperation, held in Guatemala in 1997. In addition, it provided financing for SELA technical assistance activities. Moreover, when the SELA premises were damaged by a fire, the UNDP office in Caracas provided full support to SELA activities during the emergency.

III. Conclusion

23. Cooperation between SELA and the programmes, organizations and agencies of the United Nations is growing and diversifying, and inter-agency cooperation has been established in many areas in which optimal use is being made of existing resources for the benefit of the countries of the region.